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PAPERS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE.

XIX.

# DELAWARE DOCTORS.

BY

THOS. C. STELLWAGEN, M.A., M.D., D.D.S.,

PROFESSOR OF PHYSIOLOGY, PHILADELPHIA DENTAL COLLEGE.

*Read before the Historical Society of Delaware, February, 1896.*

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE,  
WILMINGTON.

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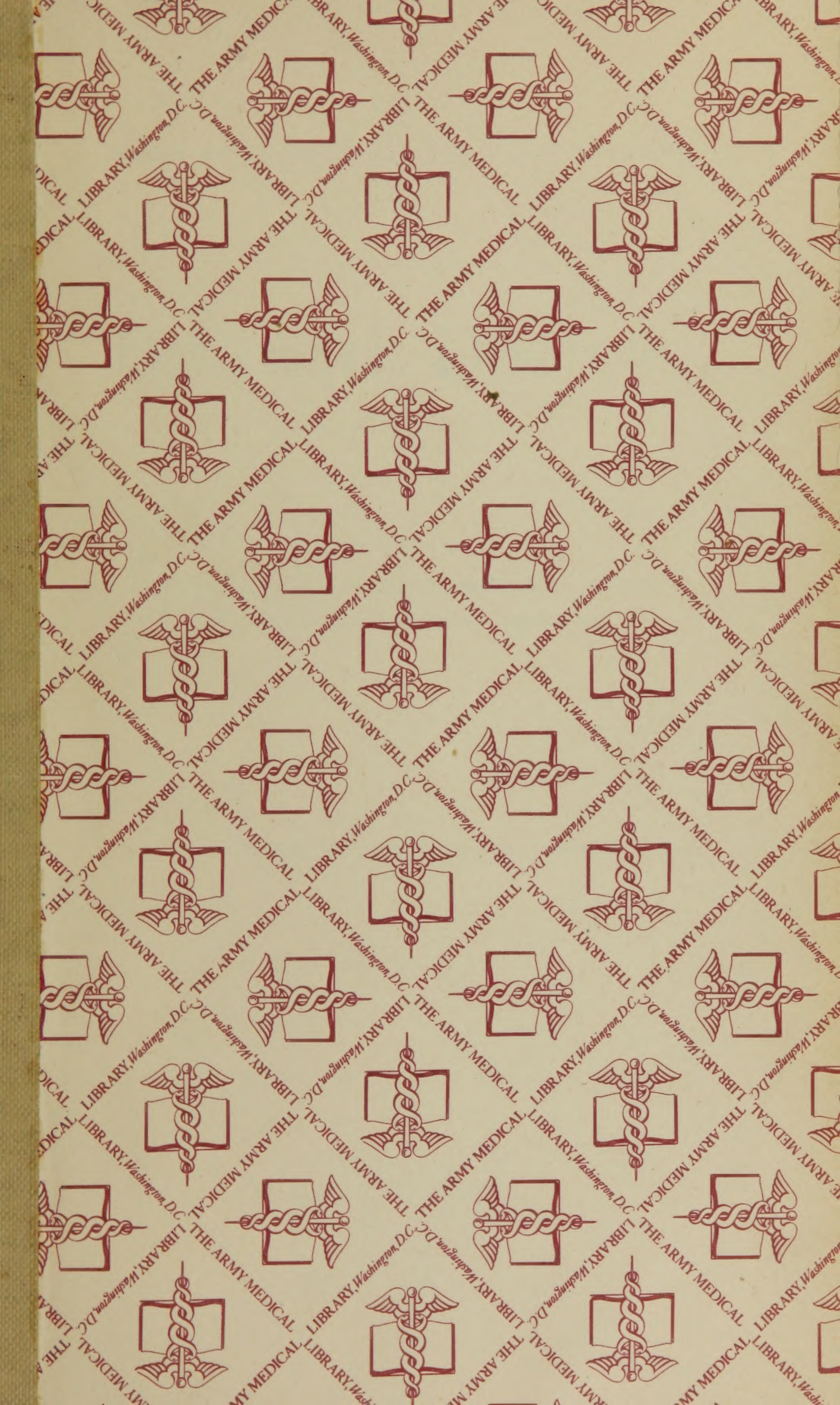
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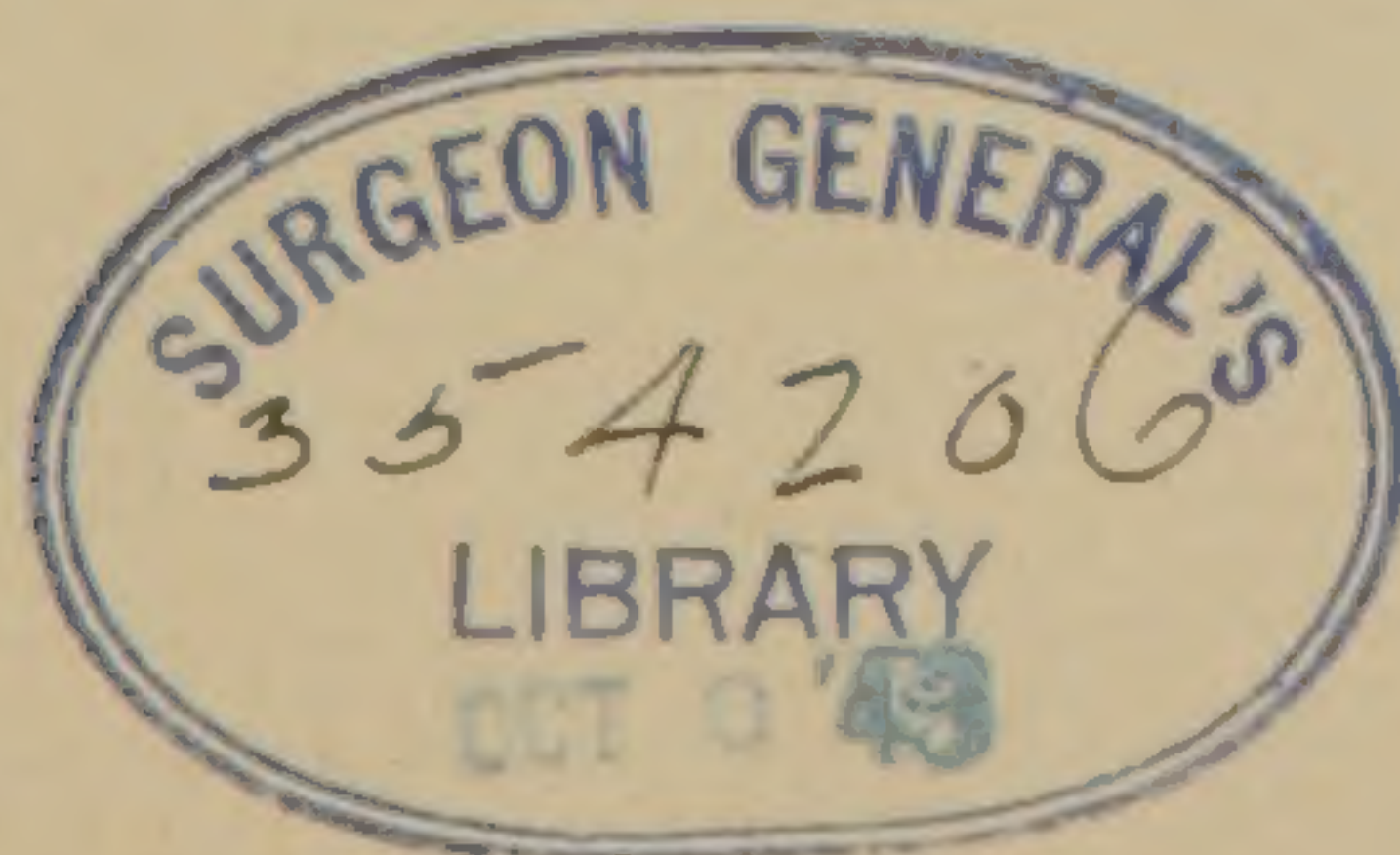
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PRESS OF J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA.



# DELAWARE DOCTORS.

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As a nursery and training-school for great men, it is evident to even a casual observer that the climate, the food, the surroundings of Delaware, must be particularly well adapted by nature for producing the highest intellectual and moral attainments. Singularly enough, the shape of your State on the map bears such a resemblance to the old-fashioned cradle that to one who is not attracted as much by glitter as by human grit, it is no small matter of surprise that it has not been called the "cradle" rather than the "diamond" State. The political, industrial, and moral influence of your men and women has been beyond all proportion to the size of your State.

It seems useless to remind this learned body that insular and peninsular people have, in the past, played a mighty part in the government of the world. Ancient Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, and Palestine were countries traversed by mighty rivers and pierced by gulfs or seas. To these doubtless they were greatly indebted for the commerce which broadened their views and made their kingdoms and empires the residence, and their rulers the protectors of the more intelligent and enlightened of mankind. Grecian, Roman, Mohammedan, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, and English, people largely peninsular, have, each



in their turn, swayed the sceptre of greatest power at some time during their existence.

Delaware may be compared with Greece as to the climate and general conditions of the peninsula of which she forms a part. Surrounded on three sides by great political neighbors, with the fourth open to the sea and bay, she, like Greece, has maintained a position always independent, and often controlling; like Greece, when compared with her neighbors, she is famous; like Greece, she is fertile, agriculturally and mentally. Many are the names of her sons and daughters that are written in brilliant tints upon the roll of fame.

Fortunately, it fell to my lot to look up that portion of her history which relates to the medical profession of your State. The richness of what, at first, appeared to be a field of limited possibilities, soon made the work a delight. The noble deeds, the scientific attainments, and the intelligent pursuit by her devotees in the healing art were unfolded before my eyes. The pleasure of rendering homage to Delaware's most modest worthies repaid, many fold, the labor and the time demanded by the research.

Soon perturbation disturbed the serenity of the work, from fear that my weak efforts would not be sufficient for the occasion. Then came a consciousness that made it seem to be a duty to the silent dead whose very delicate humility during life had much concealed their true merits. Finally, the hope arose that by the sounding of the call some slumbering giant might be awakened to fittingly recount the grand lessons of scientific charity and humanitarian love that your State's history unfolded.



The intelligence of a community and the accomplishments and culture of its professional men may be fairly estimated by the differentiation of the occupations of the individuals that compose it. Although great wealth does not, *per se*, always indicate the grade of mental enlightenment of the body politic, still thrift, capability, responsibility, prosperity, and financial solidity are invariable attributes of a State wherein the community of the learned professions is supported with sufficient liberality of emolument to encourage men of notable ability to cast their lot there and become citizens.

The Colony of Delaware was very early the home of distinguished disciples of Æsculapius. Her record shows that in 1654 she had Dr. Tyman Stidham as a settler, one hundred and twenty-two years before his adopted country issued the Declaration of Independence.

For twenty years this good man labored in his chosen field with marked success, for the annals of the Colonial government show that at his death he was possessed of considerable estate. His family, together with their descendants, whose names grace the archives of the settlements, were people of note and of great respectability. Many of the latter are still found within the vicinity of Newcastle and Wilmington.

To J. Thomas Scharf, A.M., the compiler, and Dr. Lewis P. Bush, the author of the work devoted to the history of the medical fraternity of Delaware, it is a pleasure to acknowledge obligation. The accuracy of the biographical sketches has been verified in many cases by the testimony of Delawareans, by correspondence with George M. Stern-



berg, Surgeon-General of the United States Army, and by others in positions that entitle them to be authority of greatest merit.

Dr. Henry Fisher, who came from Ireland in 1725, was a well-educated physician. He was the father of several children, among whom a son, Henry, became noted for his patriotic devotion to the cause of the Revolution. His efforts materially supported his struggling country, and the success of the war, in your section, was in no small degree assisted by and due to his personal service in supplying for the patriot army vessels for river defence and pilotage. He was the progenitor of an influential family of your State, which, by fortitude and patriotic example, combined with personal thrift, trustworthiness, and satisfactory discharge of responsible duties, together with charity to their fellow-men, have won respect and success.

Frequently has Delaware honored herself by selecting her most trusted statesmen from this body of her specially educated men. Of the numerous examples that may be quoted as evidence of the appreciation by your country of this profession's eminent scholars, we cannot omit the names of the first President of the State, Dr. John McKinley; Dr. Joshua Clayton, its last President, and Governor for two terms, who closed his earthly career so full of honors while serving as a United States Senator. In its Legislature, Dr. Henry Latimer likewise attained distinction that gained for him the envied position of a seat in the United States Senate, where Dr. James Sykes also served our country for fifteen years, and was finally elected Governor. Dr. W. T. Burton, Governor; Dr. Saulsbury, Speaker of the United



States Senate, and Governor; and in the State and United States Senate, Dr. Arnold Naudain was another whose entrance into public life was originally through the doors of a medical college. In your own city there have been chosen as chief magistrates men renowned for their skill, as Drs. James H. Hayward, J. P. Wales, Evan G. Shortlidge, and Charles R. Jeffries.

The history of your State shows that it was the third to recognize the importance of and to establish a State Medical Society. This was inaugurated by twenty-eight physicians as early as 1789. Later acts of the legislature empowered this Society to form a Board of Medical Examiners, with authority to regulate the practice of their profession, and without whose endorsement parties practising medicine were liable to penalties and fines. Now we find in the various States laws based upon those entrusted to this initial society. The first President was Dr. James Tilton, of whom we shall have occasion to speak as one of the most important factors in the war of the Revolution.

The study of the diseases peculiar to your locality was very materially advanced by the labors of the members of this Society, notably Drs. Snow, Barratt, Capelle, Tilton, Wilson, David Bush, and Edward Miller. The last contributed largely to the treatment and successful combating of intermittent and yellow fever by means of the then novel remedy, Peruvian bark, the alkaloid of which, quinine, is to-day one of the most universal and generally trusted remedies of the Pharmacopœia. His correspondence abroad was presumably in his day the most volumi-



nous, and his reputation the most world wide of any one of his profession in this country, except, probably, Professor Benjamin Rush, a distinguished Philadelphian and signer of the Declaration of Independence, who paid the greatest tribute to Dr. Miller, saying that he was "second to no physician in the United States." The first medical journal of this country was founded by Dr. Miller, in New York, where he was appointed to the important position of Port Physician, Professor of Practice of Physic in the University of that city, and attending physician to its Hospital. As a member of the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia he was well known. He was among the first to advise the drinking of water in fevers, which probably has alleviated the sufferings of mankind in this direction more than any other one remedy. He likewise was an ardent advocate of vaccination, together with Dr. Samuel Henry Black, of your State, Dr. J. Redman Coxe, of Philadelphia, and Professor William Handy, of Baltimore. The last two were so enthusiastic in their advocacy of this practice, that they each exposed a son to the dreaded disease to convince their contemporaries of the almost absolute immunity gained by the use of this virus. Dr. John Vaughan, a son of a physician, and a member of a number of famous scientific bodies, lectured upon chemistry and natural philosophy in your city as early as 1790.

In literature, as might be expected from such a body, eminence was early attained by your physicians. Several of these, among whom might be mentioned Dr. Robert R. Porter and Dr. Samuel H. Black, possessed private libraries which were proudly pointed to by their fellows as examples



of choice selections, and also among the largest private book collections in your State.

Dr. P. Brynberg Porter, who was born here, was formerly the editor of *Gaillard's Medical Journal*, and now is the New York correspondent of the *Medical News*, of Philadelphia, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, etc., etc. Dr. Robert Montgomery Bird, born in Newcastle, in 1805, was an associate editor and publisher of *The North American and United States Gazette*, of Philadelphia. He was likewise Professor of Materia Medica in the Pennsylvania Medical College from 1841 to 1843. As the author of "Nick of the Woods," and many novels, and the dramatizer of the "Gladiator," "Metamora," and other plays, he is well known throughout this country. Dr. Lewis Potter Bush, of Wilmington, was likewise a prolific author, and his papers upon the history of medicine in your State have made him a name throughout the profession in this country. In recognition of his labors, in 1886 he was elected President of the American Academy of Medicine.

Of the famous medical men of your State, many living to-day, I dare not attempt mention, except of those who in my own city are so widely known that it seems a work of supererogation to speak, and yet it would be an injustice and a positive neglect of my duty if I failed to mention Dr. James P. Lofland, associate of Dr. Franklin Bache, Professor of Chemistry in the Jefferson Medical College; Theophilus Parvin, M.D., the honored and world-wide known Professor of Obstetrics, author of numerous treatises, who to-day is loved and admired by all who know him. Professor W.



James Hearn, M.D., who stands second to none in our great cities for his ability, honesty, and absolute trustworthiness, fills the chair of Clinical Surgery in the same college. Dr. E. O. Shakespeare, the histologist and bacteriologist, Dr. Louis Starr, the author of works on the diseases of children, and the late Professor T. L. Buckingham, M.D., D.D.S., one of the founders of two dental colleges in Philadelphia. Martin W. Barr, M.D., the head of that noble and intellectual charity, the Pennsylvania Training-School for Feeble-Minded Children, which has been a blessing to those afflicted with that most sad of all ailments, imbecility.

Dr. W. G. A. Bonwill, born in your State, holds the credit of the practical adaptation of electrical force to automatic mallets, which probably were the forerunner of the modern wonders of electrical trip-hammers and machines for rock drilling and tunnelling, to which the modern railroad owes an imperishable debt. Like Dr. Physick, who invented the surgical needle, with its eye at the point, without which sewing-machines would probably have been long delayed in their arrival at their present state of perfection, this man was the progenitor of many modern inventions. H. C. Register, M.D., was also the inventor and improver of many delicate appliances for dental and surgical engines.

The late Professor James E. Garretson was born in your city in 1828, where he passed his boyhood. Moving to Philadelphia, he pursued a course in dentistry, and graduated when twenty-nine. Two years later he passed successfully the examination for the degree of Doctor of Medicine in the University of Pennsylvania. From early life he had been an earnest student, with a strong inclination



towards surgery, in which he became deeply interested, and in 1861 his association with Dr. D. Hayes Agnew in the Philadelphia School of Anatomy ripened his attainments, so that he gradually created the new specialty known as oral surgery. In this department he was the accepted authority in this country and throughout the English speaking world. His operations were of the most bold and terrible character, and yet singularly free from fatal endings. As the inventor of procedures for the removal of bone and tumors about the head and face, without leaving deforming scars, he was eminently successful. He filled, at various times, chairs in the Philadelphia Dental College and Philadelphia School of Anatomy, of which former institution he had been dean for many years. In the school of the philosophers he had excited considerable comment by a series of lectures for several winters in succession. Young men and women, mostly students of the colleges with which he was connected, flocked to his Tuesday night discourses, wherein his avowed object was the seeking for the deeper truths of life. He was prominent as one of the practical founders of the Medico-Chirurgical Hospital and the Medico-Chirurgical College, in both of which institutions he served as the president. Their success under his administration soon became phenomenal.

Ceaseless as was his activity, he also gained fame as a literary man. His philosophical writings, designed to teach self-control and restraint as means to the highest end, were published in a series of volumes under the *nom de plume* of John Darby. In addition to this herculean task, he wrote the "System of Oral Surgery," which is



considered the crowning work of his life, the present being the seventh edition. Through its agency, as I have been informed by a gentleman lately returned from abroad, he is probably as well known in Edinburgh as in Baltimore. As a humanitarian and philosopher he was probably less widely known than as a surgeon. His love for humanity and his desire to aid it were such that he realized within himself the ideal of human brotherhood. None were so poor or so sinful that they might fear to claim from him a brother's loving sympathy and help. Few but those who enjoyed his charity have any conception of its breadth. Firm in his belief in a divinity, he endeavored to implant high conception of the wonders of the All-knowing God, and yet, inasmuch as there were those who could not encompass his broad outlook, they questioned what his belief really was. Probably but few modern thinkers have so completely harmonized the various tenets and creeds of the Christian church as did he. His social life was the embodiment of virtue and earthly satisfaction. No words can adequately express the refinement and depth of his devotion to duty, love, and purity. Frugality, caution, and far-seeing preparation for the rainy day made him independent of that world which he never failed to assist, and it may be said of him, in his pursuit of pleasure as a philosopher, he rarely allowed it to divert his attention from earthly work to the disadvantage of provision for his family. When the temptation to give up the world in the physical sense for the metaphysical is considered, his life is an exhibition of the most remarkable and refined unselfishness. I quote the following opinion from a religious jour-



nal: "The finer side, the real man was little known, even to many who were in daily contact with him. While Dr. Garretson was prominent as a surgeon, a teacher, a writer, and a deep thinker, and a truly religious man, with qualities of mind and heart, the crowning one was his abounding love for humanity.

"To know the inner man was to have seen him at the bedside of the sick, the poor, the sorrowful, and the sinning. There he seemed God-inspired to try and save, and his tenderness and sympathy were Christ-like.

"Through forty years of arduous professional work he was never too busy to respond to appeals for help, and they were multitudinous."

Distinctions as to charity and self-denial are so numerous and so patent throughout the medical profession that we have come to look upon them as natural and necessary qualifications of the physician. Your State's history is covered with glory in this direction. Dr. Nicholas Way, in 1793, welcomed to his private house in your city those who fled in terror from Philadelphia, and were dreaded by your townspeople lest they should bring with them that awful disease, the yellow fever, which was hurrying hundreds to their last resting-places. His example of unbounded hospitality and fearless love caused his fellow-citizens to soon throw open their houses as refuges for the fugitives. How strange is fate! In the great epidemic of 1797, Dr. Way died in Philadelphia, a shining mark, whose death was undoubtedly caused by his personal and unflinching, steadfast devotion to those to whom he ministered. In 1802, Dr. John Vaughan was the only physician in Wilmington to



fight this fever. Dr. William Draper Brinckle, likewise, in the cholera epidemic of 1832, distinguished himself so markedly at the Buttonwood Street Hospital, Philadelphia, that some of his many admirers had the Commissioner of Spring Garden present him with a magnificent silver vase.

Patriotism, by no means confined to any class or profession in our great country, has, however, flourished and been nurtured in hearts and families of doctors throughout the world.

Probably few, if any, have more truly deserved public recognition of their great works than Dr. James Tilton, before referred to as the first President of the State Medical Society of Delaware, who graduated in 1771, at Philadelphia. His eminence as a physician was, if possible, excelled by his devotion as a patriot. Entering the Revolutionary War as a lieutenant, he served with distinction, as also in his professional capacity as an army surgeon with Washington at Long Island, White Plains, and the retreat to the Delaware. At Princeton he found the army in a sad plight. Its efficiency was almost paralyzed by the enormous number of men sick in the hospital, and the cause of American freedom was languishing and seemingly about to be completely extinguished by the prevalence of typhus fever. To Surgeon Tilton fell the task of preparing for these sick ones, who, by reason of their poor food, confined quarters, and the general depression of spirits, were being carried off more rapidly by disease than by bullets of the enemy. As surgeon in charge he quickly remodelled the entire hospital service, breaking up the large



hospitals, and dividing the sick into parties of six in a hut; each hut thoroughly ventilated and purified by the nascent creosote from the fires which were placed in the middle of the clay floors.

Probably without this device at that time Washington would have been defeated; and we know only too well to what great straits the country had been reduced, and believe that there would have been no hope of success if this scourge had not been arrested. It is but fair to claim that American independence would very likely have suffered either total extinction or a long delay, had it not been for this son of Delaware. At the close of the war, when the number of army medical officers was being reduced, Washington personally advised the retention of Surgeon Tilton. After the final surrender of the British at Yorktown, in 1782, he returned to practice in his State, from which he was sent to Congress, and after holding several positions of public trust he was appointed the first Surgeon-General of the United States Army, doubtless in recognition of his incalculable service at Princeton. Although a great sufferer, he energetically inaugurated and carried out many reforms in the Army Medical Corps. After an amputation of the thigh when nearly seventy years old, he lived some seven years more, to enjoy the honors and love of his fellow countrymen, who delighted to pay him respect. His colleagues of the Delaware State Medical Society erected a monument over his remains, as an humble tribute to his works and his eminent services, both to the profession and to his country. It seems probable that his success was very early provided for by his study on the subject of



respiration, which he wrote upon in his examination for the degree of B. M.

Delaware inscribed on her roll of honor the names of many who were heroes of the wars of the Revolution and of 1812. Dr. Jacob Jones, known to every school-boy as Commodore Jones, commanded the U. S. S. "Wasp" in that ever-memorable battle which terminated within forty-three minutes in the capture of H. B. M. S. "Frolic." When the hearts of the soldiers of our struggling little republic were sickened and saddened by repeated defeats, this, with a series of other glorious naval victories, revived the hopes and renewed and redoubled the efforts of our patriots, both afloat and ashore. To this may be added, at a second fortunate juncture, such a victory by our fleets that it may be said to have virtually closed the war of 1812. From the very jaws of defeat and death the battle of Lake Champlain may be said to have snatched the oriflamme of victory, and thus led the way to the final overthrow of all attempts and long-cherished hopes of the Mother Country to regain by force of arms her sovereignty in our land.

Commodore Thomas Macdonough was the son of a physician who, in his youth, was one of the stanch Revolutionary patriots who served his country in the army as a volunteer. Like many others of his day, it appears that he left but little for his son save an honorable name and that love of his country which made him the winner of that country's most profound admiration, which was publicly attested by well-deserved votes of thanks of State Legislatures and the United States Congress.



This gallant officer, as you well know, has never been duly appreciated by the majority of those who have written the histories of our country. As Delawareans, I trust you will pardon me for dwelling for a few moments upon the importance of this victory against a combined invading English army and fleet near Plattsburgh, and off Cumberland Head on Lake Champlain. All who have read United States history know that he met twelve thousand men of the English army, under Sir George Provost, and seventeen vessels carrying ninety-five guns and about one thousand men under Commodore Downie, of the English navy. Our hero conquered with a force of only eight hundred and twenty men, with eighty-six guns and fourteen vessels, some of the latter having been constructed and launched within forty days of the felling of the timber of which they were built.

To Macdonough, his officers and men, was due the successful building and equipment of this fleet. To them belongs the glory of having completely defeated a well-disciplined and carefully organized force in what was pronounced by all judges to be the only scientific battle between a fleet of the United States and of Great Britain. To the energy, courage, and training that accomplished the manœuvres that decided the victory, our whole country is everlastingly indebted. It was an almost providential repulse and total overthrow of an enemy and capture of a fleet of invasion which were designed to seize and hold a line of military posts extending along the chain of Lakes and the Hudson River. Had the British succeeded in this project, they would have severed from the United States the eastern sec-



tion of this country. Probably they would have destroyed our independence, or at least effected the subjugation or alienation of New England. In parts of the Eastern States, at least, it is a question as to whether the war was not already sufficiently unpopular for this blow, if completed, to have compelled the patriots of this section to succumb to dark fate,—a condition which would at the very best have so seriously crippled our infant Republic as to have made a mighty change, the result of which, happily, we are saved from even speculating upon. This, therefore, was one of the greatest and most momentous turning-points in the world's history, and its success was due to the victorious leadership of a son of a Delaware doctor.

The hour grows late, and yet the task before me is far from finished; many are the names omitted of those richly deserving, whose lives have merited immortal blessings. Such, however, in the calm enjoyment of their heavenly recompenses, have passed beyond the border where the tongue of earthly praise can afford them a moment's thought. Lifted to the highest moral, intellectual, and heavenly joys, associated with the spirits of the good of all ages, their lives are fully occupied in pressing forward with that innumerable host of angels whose joys can never cease, grow dim, sleep, flag, or waver.

As you see, my task was confined to members of one profession of your State. Imagine, if we can, what it would be if one had the time and the ability to justly portray the merits, virtues, and deeds of the rest of this truly great people. Surely no one born or living in Delaware can lack for examples upon which to model his life for the accom-



plishment of greatness. Three times have you seen in this very limited field the destiny of the whole nation balanced upon the scalpel and the swords of three of Delaware's born and reared sons,—once in the Camp Hospitals, once upon the high seas, and once upon the historic lake. How pleasant it would be, did time permit, to spend a portion in reminiscence of another whose character was as true and pure as his valor was unquestioned.

But I must stop myself, for the subject is as fascinating as my powers are mediocre, and I fear that while the theme could never weary you, the narrator has.















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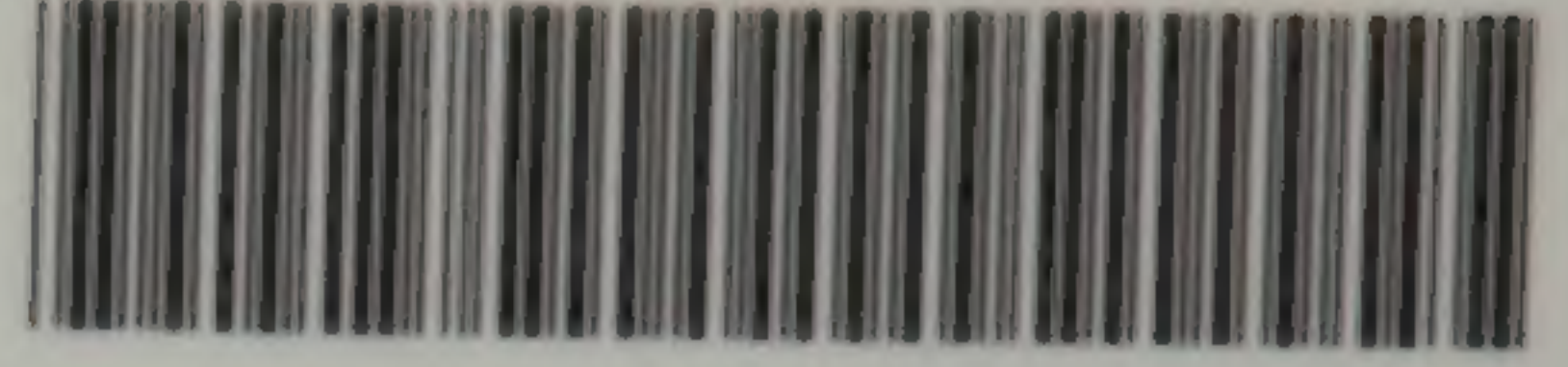


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